

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07  
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UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 3 BANGKOK 19924

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINS, PBOR, TH  
SUBJ: DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER SPEAKS ON THAILAND'S SECURITY

SUMMARY: BANGKOK POST SEPT 8 CARRIED EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH  
DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER GENERAL LEK NAEOMALI IN WHICH LEK SAID  
THAILAND WILL MAINTAIN STRICT SECURITY, PARTICULARLY ALONG  
BORDERS, IN ORDER TO DEFEND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND  
SOVEREIGNTY BUT WILL NOT PROVOKE ATTACKS AND SHOULD BE ABLE  
TO LIVE IN PEACE AS LONG AS COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS DO NOT COMMIT  
AGGRESSION. LEK EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN THAILAND'S ABILITY  
TO DEFEND ITSELF, SAYING "THE THAIS WILL FIGHT. LET NO AG-  
GRESSOR MAKE ANY MISTAKE." END SUMMARY.

1. IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW BY SENIOR EDITOR THEH CHONGKHADIKIT  
CARRIED IN BANGKOK POST SEPT 8, KNOWLEDGEABLE AND CAPABLE HIGH-  
RANKING MILITARY OFFICIAL, GENERAL LEK NAEOMALI, WHO IS  
PRESENTLY DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER, SPOKE ON SUBJECT OF  
THAILAND'S BORDERS AND SECURITY. PORTIONS OF INTERVIEW  
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WERE AS FOLLOWS:  
"THEH: HOW IS OUR SITUATION ALONG THE BURMESE BORDER?  
"LEK: THERE ARE NO OUTSTANDING BORDER PROBLEMS BETWEEN  
THAILAND AND BURMA. THE ONLY PROBLEM IS THAT CONCERNING  
THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT'S BATTLE AGAINST REBEL GROUPS, SOME  
OF WHICH HAVE CROSSED INTO THAILAND. WE TRY TO PUSH THEM  
BACK INTO BURMA. IF THEY DON'T RETURN, WE HAVE TO KEEP THEM

UNDER CONTROL.

"OUR POLICY TOWARDS BURMA IS THE SAME AS THAT ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THAT IS, WE WANT TO BE GOOD FRIENDS WITH OUR NEIGHBORS.

"AS FOR THE FISHERY PROBLEM, IT'S A CHRONIC ONE. WE ARE CONTINUING EFFORTS TO SOLVE IT. IF POSSIBLE, WE SHALL TRY TO REACH ARRANGEMENTS SIMILAR TO THOSE WITH BANGLADESH.

"THEH: IS THERE ANY THREAT FROM THE DIRECTION OF BURMA?

"LEK: AT PRESENT THERE IS NO SIGN OF A THREAT DIRECTLY FROM BURMA. FROM REPORTS RECEIVED, THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF BURMA HAS EXPANDED ITS AREA OF INFLUENCE IN THE NORTHERN PART DOWN TO THE VICINITY OF KENG TUNG. BUT THIS IS A MATTER FOR THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT TO TACKLE. WE HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH IT. THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT IS CAPABLE OF TAKING CARE OF THE SITUATION.

"THEH: ARE WE HELPING ANY OF THE MINORITY GROUPS FROM BURMA?

"LEK: IF THE MINORITY GROUPS WHICH HAVE CROSSED THE BORDER; DO NOT CONSTITUTE AN OBSTACLE TO GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES, WE WILL ALLOW THEM TO STAY UNDER OUR CONTROL. IF ANY GROUP ADVERSELY AFFECTS OUR GOOD RELATIONS WITH BURMA, WE WILL ARREST THEM AND SEND THEM BACK.

"THEH: HOW IS THE SITUATION ON OUR NORTHEASTERN AND EASTERN BORDER; AND HOW DO WE INTEND TO MEET THE SECURITY THREAT?

"LEK: ALONG THE MEKONG BORDER WITH LAOS, THERE HAVE BEEN UNCLASSIFIED

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CLOSE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THAILAND AND THE PATHET LAO. WE ARE STRICT IN GUARDING THIS SECTION OF THE BORDER. PARTICULARLY THAT BETWEEN CHIANG KHONG IN CHIANG RAI PROVINCE AND LOEI PROVINCE, WHICH BORDERS THE LAOTIAN PROVINCE OF SAYABOURY. WE ARE ALSO SPECIALLY STRICT ON SECURITY ALONG THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE NORTH-EASTERN BORDER WHICH LIES ALONG UBON RATCHATHANI PROVINCE. IN THIS AREA THERE HAVE BEEN JOINT ACTIVITIES OF THAI AND LAOTIAN COMMUNISTS, WITH SOME VIETNAMESE INVOLVED, TOO. WE HAVE TO BE MOST CAREFUL.

"THEH: WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT VIETNAMESE FORCES IN LAOS?

"LEK: THEY HAVE BEEN THERE FOR A LONG TIME. THEY NUMBER BETWEEN 40,000 TO 50,000. THEY WERE THERE DURING THE DAYS OF THE COALITION HEADED BY PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA. EVEN NOW WHEN LAOS HAS A COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT, THEY ARE STILL THERE.

"THEH: DO THEY CONSTITUTE A THREAT TO THAILAND?

"LEK: IF THEY REMAIN QUIET, THEY ARE NOT A THREAT. HOWEVER, IF THE VIETNAMESE ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES WHICH VIOLATE OUR SOVEREIGNTY, WE MUST CONSIDER THEM AS A DANGER TO US. WE ARE ALWAYS PREPARED TO MEET ANY EMERGENCY. WE ARE NOT CARELESS ALONG OUR FRONTIERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE MAIN-

TAIN STRICT SECURITY.

"THEH: WHAT IS THE SECURITY SITUATION ALONG OUR BORDER  
WITH CAMBODIA?

"LEK: IN THE AREA BORDERING CAMBODIA THAI INSURGENTS ARE  
OPERATING WHO HAVE BEEN STRAINED AND ARE SUPPORTED BY UNIT 203  
IN CAMBODIA. THERE HAVE BEEN CONSTANT BORDER CROSSINGS. THE  
FIRST ARMY AND THE BORDER POLICE PATROL ARE CARRYING OUT  
SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS. REPORTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED OF FRE-  
QUENT CLASHES.

"THE KHMER ROUGE ARE ENGAGED IN MOVEMENTS WITHIN THEIR  
SIDE OF THE BORDER, WAITING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE AN  
INCURSION TO ATTACK A GOVERNMENT UNIT OR STATION OR A VIL-  
LAGE.

"OUR PATROLS ARE ON THE ALERT. THEY HAVE DRIVEN BACK  
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KHMER ROUGE FORCES WHICH HAD CROSSED ONTO THAI SOIL. WE  
HAVE THE FIRM POLICY TO DEFEND OUR SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL  
INTEGRITY, AND WE WANT TO PROTECT THE LIVES AND PROPERTY  
OF THAI ACITIZENS WHO LIVE ALONG THE BORDER.

"THEH: IT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT WE HAVE AN UNEQUAL  
TREATY WITH THE FRENCH WHICH TODAY PLACES US AT A DIS-  
ADVANTAGE WITH REGARD TO THE BOUNDARY FORMED BY THE MEKONG  
RIVER WITH LAOS. WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT;

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

"LEK: OUR TREATY WITH THE FRENCH WAS MADE LONG AGO. THE DEEP CHANNEL HAS CHANGED SINCE THEN. MOST OF THE SANDBARS AND ISLANDS ARE CLAIMED BY LAOS. TO NEGOTIATE A BORDER AGREEMENT BASED ON INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE, WE MUST FIRST HAVE FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH LAOS. ONLY THEN CAN WE TALK AND CARRY OUT DEMARCATION.

"AT PRESENT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH LAOS IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR SUCH NEGOTIATIONS.

"THE SAME APPLIES TO THE BORDER WITH CAMBODIA.

"THEH: HOW DO WE DETERMINE WHERE THE REAL BOUNDARY WITH CAMBODIA LIES?

"LEK: ACTUALLY, WE ALREADY HAD BORDER MARKERS PLACED THE TROUBLE IS, THE CAMBODIANS DO NOT RECOGNIZE THOSE MARKERS.

"THEH: WHAT DO YOU FEEL IS THE LONG-TERM THREAT FROM VIET-NAM?

"LEK: THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE IS THE INCOMPABILITY BETWEEN A COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT AND A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT. WHAT SORT OF THREAT IS POSED BY VIET-NAM DEPENDS ON VIET-NAM'S  
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ATTITUDE. IF VIET-NAM LOVES PEACE, THEN THERE WON'T BE A "IF EACH OF US REMAINS WITHIN OUR OWN COUNTRY AND DO NOT TRY TO COMMIT AGGRESSION AGAINST ANOTHER, THEN THERE IS NO DANGER.

"THEH: WHAT IS THE MORE IMPORTANT THREAT-EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL?

"LEK: THE EXTERANL THREAT AND THE INTERNAL THREAT ARE LINKED. INSIDE OUR COUNTRY THE THREAT COMES FROM THE COMMUNIST INSURGENTS. THESE INSURGENTS RECEIVE ADVICE AND SUPPORT FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES.

"THAI INSURGENT LEADERS HAVE UNDERGONE INDOCTRINATION AND GUERRILLA WARFARE TRAINING IN VIET-NAM AND LAOS. THEY CONTINUE TO RECEIVE SUPPORT IN SUCH SUPPLIES AS ARMS WHEN THEY RETURN TO THAILAND.

"THEH: HAS THE SITUATION CONCERNING THE INSURGENCY IMPROVED?

"LEK: NO. NEITHER HAS IT DETERIORATED. THE DIFFERENCE IN THE SITUATION IS THAT THERE IS INTENSIFIED AND CONTINUOUS SUPPRESSION BY GOVERNMENT FORCES NOW.

"THEH: HOW DO THE PEOPLE IN THE RURAL AREAS, PARTICULARLY IN THE SENSITIVE PLACES, FEEL TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT?

"LEK: MORE PEOPLE HAVE COME AROUND TO CO-OPERATING WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

"THE GOVERNMENT HAS HELPED THEM SET UP THEIR OWN SELF-DEFENSE VOLUNTEER FORCES IN MANY AREAS.

"THEH: WHAT WILL WE DO IN CASE OF AN OPEN ATTACK AGAINST

OUR COUNTRY?

"LEK: IF THERE IS AN OPEN MAJOR ACT OF AGGRESSION AGAINST US, IT IS OUR PRIMARY DUTY TO DEFEND OUR OWN COUNTRY. WE MAY RECEIVE ASSISTANCE FROM SOME COUNTRIES. AT LEAST, WE HAVE THE MANILA PACT. WE MAY APPEAL TO OUR ALLIES TO HELP US IF WE ARE ATTACKED BY OVERWHELMING FORCES.

"THE EXTENT AND TYPE OF AID WILL DEPEND ON THE INDIVIDUAL GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED.

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"THE MOST IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE IS THAT WE MUST DEFEND OUR OWN COUNTRY WITH WHATEVER MEANS WE HAVE.

"THEH: WHAT HAVE WE TO DO TO ENHANCE OUR DEFENSE CAPABILITY?

"LEK: IN HELPING OURSELVES, WE HAVE TO TRY THARD TO SET UP INDUSTRIES WHICH WILL MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO BUILD OUR OWN ARMAMENTS. THE GOVERNMENT IS ENCOURAGING FOREIGN INVESTMENTS IN INDUSTRY.

"THE GOVERNMENT HAS THE POLICY OF EQUIPPING THE ARMED FORCES WITH THE KIND OF MODERN WEAPONS NECESSARY TO RESIST SUCH AN ATTACK.

"THEH: DURING THE 10 MONTHS OF THE GOVERNMENT, HAS THE NATIONAL SECURITY SITUATION IMPROVED?

"LEK: IN MY VIEW, YES. AT LEAST, THERE ARE NO DEMONSTRATIONS, NO AGITATION, NO UNREST, LIKE IN THE PAST. THE KIND OF SITUATION WE HAD IN THE PAST ADVERSELY AFFECTED THE NATIONAL SECURITY.

"THEH: IS CHINA A THREAT TO THAILAND?

"LEK: IF WE IMPLEMENT A POLICY THAT IS GENTLE, CIRCUMSPECT AND REASONABLE, THEN, I DON'T THINK PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA WILL POSE ANY THREAT.

"THEH: WHAT ABOUT STUDENTS WHO HAVE GONE INTO THE JUNGLE?

"LEK: THEY WENT ON THEIR OWN, TO JOIN THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN COMMUNISM. BUT THE GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN THEM OPPORTUNITY TO RETURN, TO START NEW LIVES, TO BUILD UP THE NATION AND HELP IN DEVELOPING DEMOCRACY WITH HIS MAJESTY THE KING AS CONSTITUTIONAL HEAD OF STATE.

"IT IS UP TO THE STUDENTS THEMSELVES ON WHETHER THEY WILL HEED THE APPEAL.

"THEH: WILL THEY BE ARRESTED WHEN THEY COME OUT?

"LEK: NO, EXCEPT THOSE WHO HAVE COMMITTED SPECIFIC RIMES. EVEN COMMUNIST TERRORISTS WHO HAVE ENGAGED IN BATTLE WITH OUR SOLDIERS OR POLICE WILL BE RECEIVED WITH OPEN ARMS. THEY WILL NOT BE SENT TO PRISON BUT TREATED UNDER OUR KARUNYATHEP PROJECT. THIS PROJECT CALLS FOR THE TRAINING AND CHANGING OF ATTITUUEDS. AFTER THE COURSE, THEY CAN RETURN TO THEIR HOMES AND LIVE AS ORDINARY CITIZENS.

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"THE COURSE DOESN'T TAKE YEARS. MANY HAVE TURNED NEW LEAVES.

"THEH: IS WHICH REGION IS THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNIST INSURGENCY MOST IMPORTANT?

"LEK: IT IS IMPORTANT IN EVERY REGION. COMMUNIST INSURGENTS IN THE NORTH AND NORTHEAST EASILY OBTAIN SUPPORT FROM ABROAD. THEY CAN ALSO ESCAPE ACROSS THE BORDER DURING OPERATIONS AGAINST THEM. WE ARE CONCERNED OVER SUCH A SITUATION.

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

"THEH: IS THERE ANY TRUTH TO SPECULATION THAT THE COMMUNISTS WILL LIKE TO TAKE OVER OUR NORTHEASTERN REGION? COMMUNISTS WILL LIKE TO TAKE OVER OUR NORTHEASTERN REGION?

"LEK: IT IS LIKELY TO BE TRUE BECAUSE THERE HAVE BEEN DECLARATIONS TO THIS EFFECT. AT THE SAME TIME, THE VIETNAMESE ARE INDUSTRIALIZING AND THEY NEED POWER. THE MEKONG HAS GREAT HYDROELECTRIC POTENTIAL. ONE MAY HAVE TO CONTROL BOTH BANKS OF THE RIVER TO TAP THIS POWER SOURCE FULLY.

"THEH: A NEW THEORY ON DOMINOES IS BEING TALKED ABOUT. IT IS NOW CONCLUDED THAT THAILAND IS NOT A DOMINO WHICH WOULD FALL THE WAY THE INDOCHINA DOMINOES HAVE. THIS IS BECAUSE OF DIFFERENCES IN HISTORICAL, CULTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DIFFERENCES, AND OTHER REASONS.

"NOW IT IS SAID THAT THAILAND IS THE FIRST IN ANOTHER SET OF DOMINOES. IF THAILAND FALLS, THE OTHER ASEAN COUNTRIES WILL BE AFFECTED AND AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND THREATENED. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS THEORY?

"LEK: THAILAND'S STRATEGIC POSITION MAKES IT LIKE A FORT STANDING IN THE WAY OF EXPANSION OF COMMUNIST POWER AND UNCLASSIFIED

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INFLUENCE SOUTHWARDS IN THE DIRECTION OF MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE, INDONESIA, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND. AND EVEN AMERICA IS AFFECTED.

"

THEH: HOW STRONG IS OUR FORT?

"LEK: IT IS DIFFICULT TO BREAK DOWN THE FORT. HIS MAJESTY THE KING STANDS FIRM AS A SYMBOL OF UNITY OF THE THAI NATION. THE THAI PEOPLE HAVE INHERITED THE BLOOD OF WARRIORS FROM THE PAST. WE WILL FIGHT AGAINST ANY INVADER WITH OUR LIVES.

"WE ALSO HAVE MILITARY STRENGTH AS A DETERRENT. ANY WOULD-BE AGGRESSOR WOULD HAVE TO THINK TWICE BEFORE MAKING AN ATTACK. HE WOULD HAVE TO THINK CAREFULLY WHETHER THE INVASION WOULD SUCCEED.

"AT PRESENT THE THAI PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF THE DANGERS, AND THEY ARE UNITED IN ALMOST EVERY BIT OF THE COUNTRY. THEY WANT TO DEFEND THEMSELVES. THE THAIS WILL FIGHT. LET NO AGGRESSOR MAKE ANY MISTAKE.

"THE PEOPLE OF THE INDOCHIAN STATES WHICH HAVE COME UNDER COMMUNIST RULE ARE NOT YET READY FOR ANY BIG WAR. THEY HAVE TO FACE RESISTANCE GROUPS IN THEIR OWN COUNTRIES. IF THEY ATTACK US THEIR SOLDIERS WILL BE OCCUPIED AT THE FRONTLINES WHILE THE RESISTANCE GROUPS WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO CARRY OUT THEIR ACTIVITIES. THIS WOULD MEAN CIVIL WAR.

"IT IS NOT EASY FOR FORTRESS THAILAND TO BE ASSAULTED AND BROKEN INTO."

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